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Gary Nixon
Chief Executive Officer
Warren Wood - A Specialist Academy
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Dear Mr Nixon

Short inspection of Warren Wood - A Specialist Academy

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 2018 with Liz Moore, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and senior leaders lead the school very well. You have ensured that the quality of teaching is of a high standard and pupils are making strong progress across the curriculum. The external moderation of pupils' work in the early years and at the end of key stages 1 and 2 has shown that teachers are accurate in their assessments. The staff know each pupil very well. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in asking pupils questions in such a way as to enable pupils to understand and answer. The relationships between staff and pupils are very positive.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and supported through enrichment activities. Pupils enjoyed a visit to Gainsborough Old Hall as part of their Tudor topic. Following their visit, pupils identified features of a typical Tudor building. After a visit to a wildlife park, pupils studied the definition of warm and cold-blooded animals and classified animals into the two groups. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy a residential visit to a farm each year to develop their independence skills.

The previous inspection report identified that not all leaders and governors were clear about their roles and responsibilities. You and senior leaders have established clear lines of responsibility for yourselves and for middle leaders. You regularly check the quality of teaching and ensure that staff have training to improve their practice. Middle leaders are helping to raise standards in their subject-champion roles. Governors monitor the pupil premium spending closely to check that it is having the desired impact. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others has closed. Leadership at all levels is now very strong.

Also at the last inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that activities set for pupils are appropriate and that staff encourage pupils to use signs and symbols to support their communication. Pupils are set appropriate activities across the curriculum to help them make good progress. In science, pupils produced information leaflets about wild animals to a good standard. In geography, pupils plotted the locations of volcanoes on a world map. Most pupils are making good progress across the curriculum. Occasionally, the most able pupils do not produce work to the standard of which they are capable.

Staff have had training to support pupils' speech, language and communication development. The training has included teaching phonics and asking appropriate questions to support pupils' language development. Children in the early years make particularly strong progress in their communication and language skills. Staff focus on specific areas of development for each child to help them communicate. Pupils use their phonics skills well to help them read unknown words.

Safeguarding is effective.

The designated safeguarding leaders are very effective in their roles. They work closely with families to ensure that they receive the most appropriate support from a range of services. The safeguarding lead from the trust is highly knowledgeable and leads multi-agency meetings to ensure that services work effectively together to meet the needs of the children and their families. Furthermore, leaders will challenge decisions made by external agencies if they do not feel that they are appropriate.

Staff have received extensive training for safeguarding. They know how to report any concerns that they may have. Leaders take prompt action following any concerns raised. The safeguarding files are well maintained and securely stored. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils' attendance is above that in similar schools nationally. Leaders closely monitor attendance and support pupils and their families if there is an issue with low attendance. In most of these cases, attendance of these individuals improves rapidly. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is below that of similar schools.

Pupils' behaviour is good and has improved rapidly over the past year. The number of incidents of poor behaviour, which has required members of staff to physically

restrain pupils, has dropped sharply. Leaders feel that this has been due to staff training centred on pupils' emotional well-being and their mental health. Staff are more aware of how pupils' anxieties can trigger poor behaviour and have put in place strategies to prevent misbehaviour from escalating. The school is a calm environment and the very large majority of staff who responded to the staff survey agreed that behaviour was good at the school.

Inspection findings

- The key lines of enquiry for this inspection focused on how well all leaders, including governors, undertake their roles and responsibilities, how effectively teachers set challenging work for pupils, and how effectively teachers enable pupils to use signs and symbols to improve communication.
- The senior leadership team evaluate very effectively the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The capacity of leaders to make sustained improvements at the school is very strong. Senior leaders have empowered middle leaders to take more responsibility for their roles, which has improved the quality of teaching. A recent example of this strategy has been the improvement in the quality of teaching in mathematics. The subject-leader champion has undertaken extensive training, with both special and mainstream schools, to improve her own subject knowledge and leadership skills. Other staff in school have observed her teach and she has scrutinised pupils' work through the school. The impact of this is evident in pupils' work. Pupils develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills very well. Pupils are making strong and rapid progress in this subject.
- The governing body knows the school well. Governors receive detailed reports about the progress that pupils are making and they check that the school is moderating with other schools to validate the school's assessments. Governors visit the school regularly to check how well the school is implementing the school improvement priorities. The reports of visits are shared with all governors and staff. Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and next steps.
- Teachers use a wide range of communication techniques to engage the pupils in their learning. In the early years, the use of song entuses children and they readily participate in musical movement. Computer technology and word and sound mats are used to help support pupils to write. Overtime, pupils write independently. Picture symbols and Makaton are used appropriately to ensure that pupils can communicate their thoughts. Pupils communicate very well through the school.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers are challenging most pupils consistently well. Pupils' writing is developed very well through their topic work. Older pupils have been studying India and the wildlife in the country. Pupils wrote about a tiger, 'He is angry because he is looking for food. He is hunting down animals to eat.' The most able pupils are challenged on some occasions. Pupils writing a story wrote, 'I discovered the crew plotting a mutiny with my second in command.' However, close scrutiny of this group's work shows that they are not consistently producing work of a high standard to ensure that they fulfil their potential across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are more consistently challenged to fulfil their potential.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the principal and the vice-principal, the trust's safeguarding and welfare officer, the school's designated lead for safeguarding, the lead for behaviour, the coordinators for mathematics and art and design, the administration manager and small groups of teachers and teaching assistants. We met with the acting chair of the governing body and one other governor. Inspectors heard pupils read and spoke with two groups of pupils. We reviewed the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans and records about keeping children safe. Inspectors reviewed the seven parent responses to the free Ofsted text service and the 29 responses to the staff survey. There were too few responses to Parent View for the results to be published.